



Michigan Association of Planning
A Chapter of the American Planning Association

May 25, 2016

Senator Tom Casperson
Michigan State Senate
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

To the honorable Senator Casperson and the Senate Transportation Committee:

I am writing to express opposition to Senate Bill 0955, a bill to consider public school property used for a public school purposes to be unzoned and exempt from zoning. The Michigan Association of Planning believes this bill undermines local authority and will create serious land use conflict and quality of life problems.

Already public schools do not as a practice honor municipal planning and zoning, to the detriment of both the school system and the community. Local governments and schools should be encouraged to work together for the good of the community. Considering public school property "unzoned" will have many unanticipated impacts including allowing potentially incompatible and inharmonious land uses in districts that could affect the rights of property owners already present. The bill opens the door for non-school related uses that provide a commercial or financial benefit to the public school, non-school related uses that could diminish quiet enjoyment of the land of adjacent property owners.

MAP has advocated for many years that schools should not only be subject to local zoning, but that school uses and their ancillary uses should be consistent with the municipal master plan as well. When looked at comprehensively, the positive and negative impacts of a school and its uses can be evaluated, and negative effects mitigated. As it stands now, municipalities have no control over school uses, and they should. A school has impacts that should be evaluated like any other large scale development, including impacts on water and sewer systems, traffic impacts, and the cost to the municipality to deliver public services to the school.

Zoning protects property values, provides predictability for adjacent property owners who know what to expect, and regulates the use of land and the placement and scale of buildings. That schools are exempt from zoning already is problematic for many municipalities as schools are not required to secure local government approval for expansions, modifications or site plan approval. Schools should be subject to local zoning.

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MAP recommends allowing zoning exemptions only for those schools that participate in/are compliance with the community's master plan.

The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) is a 501 c 3 nonprofit membership organization which represents more than 4,000 professional planners, municipal elected officials and appointed planning commissioners and zoning board of appeal members. These are the local leaders who are charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of a community through planning and zoning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea Brown".

Andrea Brown, AICP
Executive Director, Michigan Association of Planning

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